



Office of Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi

Making America Safer: Closing the Security Gap

Next week, we will remember the attack on America of two years ago that took the lives of more than 3,000 people. It will be a day of mourning and a day to honor the memories of the beloved men, women, and children who perished that day.

Determination and commitment resounded throughout this Congress in the aftermath of that dreadful day. Never again would we allow these terrorists to cross our borders unquestioned to plan their deadly acts on American soil. Never again would we allow them to walk through our airports unchallenged, hijack an aircraft, and turn it into a powerful weapon. Never again would we send our bravest citizens—our police, firefighters, and emergency personnel—into a fiery inferno ill-equipped and unable to communicate with each other.

In the aftermath of the attacks of September 11, Congress responded with unprecedented unity and speed. We authorized the President to use all necessary force to destroy the al-Qaida network and the Taliban government that provided it safe harbor. We enacted legislation to overhaul our airport security system, fortify our borders, and provide our intelligence and law enforcement agencies with new tools to track down terrorists at home and abroad. We passed legislation to secure our seaports. Democrats proposed that we form a new Cabinet-level department to protect the homeland. Later, the President endorsed this proposal and we worked together to establish the Department of Homeland Security.

Secretary Ridge has stated that “today we are more secure and far better protected than on September 10, 2001. And every single day we get even more secure.” But this standard sets the bar far too low. Now, two years after the most deadly single-day attack in our nation's history, the question we should be asking is whether we are as secure as we need to be from future terrorist attacks. Unfortunately, the answer is “no.” In the words of an expert bipartisan commission of the Council on Foreign Relations, we are “dangerously unprepared” to prevent and respond to another terrorist attack.

What follows is a set of Democratic priorities to secure the homeland and a call for action to the Administration. It is a plan that puts security first. It is a plan that says “two years is too long to wait.” It is a plan that calls on the Administration to fulfill its commitment to make Americans safer and more secure.

Preempting Terrorist Attacks

Create a Unified Terrorist “Watch List.” Two years after September 11th, our government still does not have a single database of suspected terrorists for the worldwide use of intelligence officers, federal, state, and local law enforcement, border inspectors, and immigration officials. While the Administration promised to fix this problem months ago, today nine federal agencies are operating 12 separate watch lists, leaving open the possibility that a terrorist could be allowed to enter the United States because they were on one agency’s watch list but not another’s. *The Administration must ensure that the government creates a unified terrorist watch list, so that the kind of intelligence gaps leading to the attacks of September 11th never happen again.*

Share Information With State and Local Law Enforcement. To preempt terrorist attacks, the federal government needs to provide specific, usable threat information to state and local law enforcement. Today, state and local law enforcement officials have not been granted the security clearances they need, receive scattered and sometimes conflicting information from the federal government, and lack the best information technology and interoperable communications equipment available. *Federal agencies must get the flow of information moving to state and local law enforcement and other officials who are the eyes and the ears of our communities.*

Set Priorities for Protecting the United States Based on Threats and Vulnerabilities. Two years after September 11th, the United States still does not have a comprehensive national threat and vulnerability assessment to guide our efforts to preempt or respond to terrorist attacks. The Department of Homeland Security has not carried out this essential task. *The Department of Homeland Security must develop a comprehensive terrorist threat assessment, catalogue our critical vulnerabilities across the nation, and use these tools to set priorities and create a detailed strategy to protect the homeland.*

Secure Foreign Stockpiles of Nuclear Materials. Today, huge stockpiles of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons materials lie unguarded and vulnerable at sites across parts of the former Soviet Union. The Administration’s efforts to secure these materials have been inadequate. *The Administration must fully support bipartisan programs to keep these materials out of the hands of terrorists.*

Protecting Our Borders on Land, Sea, and Air

Hire additional border agents and inspectors. The USA Patriot Act and the Border Security and Visa Entry Reform Act of 2002 required the Administration to hire hundreds of new agents and inspectors for the northern border. Almost two years later, the Administration has not met this basic mandate. *The Administration must comply with the laws it endorsed by hiring thousands of new border patrol agents and inspectors to provide vigilance at ports of entry and along our borders. All inspectors must be rigorously trained to detect fraudulent documents and carry out other essential duties.*

Monitor the border 24/7. Hundreds of miles of our border go unmonitored by personnel or technology every day. Yet technology currently exists - such as unmanned aerial vehicles, remote sensors, and long-range cameras—to monitor every mile of the northern and southern border for passage of terrorists, illegal migrants or cargo. *The Department of Homeland Security should deploy new and existing technologies to ensure that every mile of our land border is secured.*

Keep Track Of Foreign Nationals Who Enter And Exit the United States. Today, there is not a single system for keeping track of who enters and exits the United States. Even more alarming, border agents and inspectors do not have real-time information on potential terrorists who are likely to try to enter our nation. The Administration has failed to fully implement a comprehensive automated system to keep track of who enters and exists the United States. *The Department of Homeland Security must develop and deploy a comprehensive entry/exit system, and provide access to a unified terrorist watch list to frontline agents and inspectors.*

Check Cargo For Weapons Of Mass Destruction. Millions of cargo containers enter the United States and travel through our communities every year. Currently, less than 3 percent of the cargo containers entering U.S. ports are ever checked to determine their contents. This Administration has not deployed the personnel or equipment to ensure that these containers are free of weapons of mass destruction. *The Administration must ensure that robust teams of Customs inspectors are permanently stationed at high-risk ports abroad, increase accountability for companies shipping goods into the U.S., develop technology to detect weapons of mass destruction, and deploy systems to track every container and ship entering a U.S. port.*

Implement Port Security Plans. US ports are developing plans to provide the security necessary in the post-September 11th world, such as installing cameras, building fences and posting guards. Yet the Administration provided no support for these efforts in its most recent budget. Due to the lack of funding and commitment, many ports are struggling to get these changes in place, leaving them extremely vulnerable. *The Administration must commit the personnel and resources to fully secure our ports.*

Strengthen The Coast Guard. Since September 11th, the U.S. Coast Guard has led the nation's efforts to secure 95,000 miles of coastline and 361 ports while ensuring the flow of commerce. However, the Coast Guard is short on personnel and its plans to upgrade ships and air patrol are five years behind schedule. *The Administration must strengthen the Coast Guard by increasing personnel by 15 percent and upgrading the fleet of frontline ships and aircraft in half the time of current plans.*

Screen Cargo On All Passenger Aircraft. Today, 22 percent of all air cargo moves on passenger flights without a security check, despite a law that the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) will screen all cargo. TSA instead relies on “known shippers” despite evidence of numerous security violations. *The Department of Homeland Security must establish a security screening process for cargo placed on passenger aircraft.*

Protect Passenger Aircraft From Missile Attack. Passenger planes are totally undefended against attack by surface to air missiles. Such missiles are widely available and of known interest to terrorists. The Administration has not deployed any defenses against this critical threat. *The Department of Homeland Security must accelerate research for on-board anti-missile technology for passenger aircraft, improve airport perimeter security, and deploy missile defenses as soon as technically feasible.*

Providing Security Inside America

Assert Leadership to Secure Critical Infrastructure. Since September 11th, the Administration has paid insufficient attention to the protection of critical infrastructure within the United States, including chemical and nuclear facilities, commercial transport, mass transit, power systems and other utilities, and high-volume buildings and public venues like skyscrapers and stadiums. While 85 percent of critical infrastructure is privately owned, the Administration's over-reliance on voluntary private action to enhance security has left us with a weak patchwork of efforts that does not give American communities the protection they deserve.

The Administration must improve critical infrastructure protection across the board. It must rapidly develop a single comprehensive national list of risks and vulnerabilities in all critical infrastructure sectors and work with the private sector and municipal governments to provide the necessary level of security at these facilities. When unacceptable vulnerabilities remain, swift action must be taken to eliminate them.

Chemical Facilities. A terrorist attack on a chemical facility could send a deadly toxic cloud into population centers. Today there are over 3,000 chemical facilities where a toxic release could threaten more than 10,000 people. An accident at any of over 120 of those facilities could put more than 1 million people at risk. These plants remain highly vulnerable to a terrorist attack.

The Administration must require chemical facilities to assess their security vulnerabilities and implement security improvement plans.

Electrical Power Grid. The blackout of 2003 clearly demonstrated the weaknesses in our electricity grid and its vulnerability to potential terrorist attack. Our electrical systems are vulnerable to failures in key nodes, need better fail-safe mechanisms to isolate outages, and lack sufficient redundancy to compensate for outages. *The Administration must modernize the power grid and harden it against potential attack and disruption by ensuring adequate back-up systems, improved fail-safe mechanisms, and more secure operating and safety systems and protocols.*

Nuclear Power Plants. The United States has 104 nuclear reactors in 31 states. Those who live in communities with nuclear power plants must have assurances that the highest levels of security are maintained and that emergency planning is thorough and comprehensive. *The Administration must maintain the highest levels of security at our nuclear power facilities.*

Make Cyber Security a Top Priority and Appoint a Senior Cyber Security Official. Today, there is no senior Administration official in charge of cyber security in the federal government -- no one is responsible for planning to prevent an electronic September 11th that could damage our financial systems, public utilities, telecommunications and other vital systems. *The Administration must create a Cyber Command Center led by a senior Administration official so that America can organize its defense against potential cyber attacks and organize a response in a time of crisis.*

Improve Training and Awareness. America's cyber security ultimately rests in the hands of the private sector and individual citizens. Today, little is being done to help the tens of thousands of systems administrators across the nation keep their networks secure. Not enough is being done to equip home users with the tools to protect their privacy and computers from cyber attacks. *The Administration must support efforts by educational institutions to reach out to computer users and provide the security training necessary for them to protect themselves from cyber attack.*

Promote Standards and Practices. There are currently no standardized security certifications and guidelines for government and business computer systems, let alone for the consumer market. *The Administration must develop a public-private partnership to develop a recognized "seal of approval" for standards, benchmarks, and best practices.*

Preparing Our Communities

Arming First Responders With the Tools They Need. According to an independent task force sponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations, the U.S. is "dangerously unprepared" to respond to a catastrophic terrorist attack. Yet, two years after September 11th, there has been no systematic review to determine the equipment, training, personnel, and planning America's first responders need to protect our communities from terrorist attacks. Grant programs remain inefficiently administered and lack a coherent strategy. While funding for some programs has increased, we have no way of measuring the capabilities of our first responders and determining the investments necessary to provide the right level of security for all Americans. *The Department of Homeland Security must get the best equipment and training into the hands of the police, firefighters and emergency personnel who will be the first on the scene of an attack.*

Enable First Responders to Communicate. America's first responders still can't talk with one another at a time of crisis. Communications equipment still is not interoperable and that means that too often at a disaster site, firefighters, police and emergency personnel can't communicate. Two years after September 11th, the situation remains as disconnected as ever. *The Department of Homeland Security must deploy nationwide the communications equipment necessary for first responders to take effective and coordinated action.*

Develop Vaccines to Counter Bioterrorism. The threat of bioterrorism is a clear and present danger to the American people, but we are not prepared to respond to the breadth and sophistication of the potential biological attacks that we face. The Administration's "Project BioShield" aspires to develop vaccines for five pathogens in the next decade, but the Defense Science Board estimates that we need

57 vaccines, antidotes, and diagnostics to address the current level of threat. *The Administration must implement a robust plan that asserts federal leadership, in conjunction with the private sector, to produce the medicines we will need to counter the bioterror threat.*

Build Surge Capacity in Major Hospitals. The effects of an attack using chemical, biological or radiological weapons would be sudden and devastating on our communities. America's health care system is already stretched to capacity. *Federal agencies must help major hospitals accommodate potential large increases in patient suffering from the effects of catastrophic attack, and acquire the specialized tools the number of hospitals needed to diagnose and respond to chemical, biological or radiological attacks.*

Protecting Our Country and Our Constitution

We can strengthen our homeland security while protecting privacy and traditional civil rights and liberties. Our country can be secure while continuing to be a beacon for democracy around the world. *The Administration must take strong measures to protect security across the board while maintaining respect for constitutional guarantees in the areas of privacy, due process, and the right to counsel.*